

Caved In

House leaders accept Senate tax terms

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican leaders in the House of Representatives abruptly caved in and agreed to demands by President Barack Obama, congressional Democrats and fellow Republicans for a two-month extension of tax cuts for all workers. The agreement, which was struck after some of the staunchest conservatives in the House of Representatives began to retreat, also would renew jobless benefits for almost 2 million people. Obama welcomed the deal and praised Congress for ending a "partisan stalemate." His statement came immediately after House Speaker John Boehner said his Republican majority would go along with the deal after it had strongly rejected it for days.

A tax increase would have infuriated voters ahead of November's presidential and congressional elections and could have slowed the weak U.S. economic recovery.

The decision came after an intense day of maneuvering in which the Senate's Republican minority's leader, Mitch McConnell, urged the House to accept the Senate's short-term fix with negotiations to come later on a yearlong extension. Obama, too, criticized Republicans for blocking something all parties agreed was needed.

The division between the House and Senate Republicans was unusual in a Congress with an almost totally united Republican Party since it took control of the House in 2010. □

House leaders accept Senate tax terms

Speaker of the House Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, pauses during a news conference on the payroll tax cut on Capitol Hill on Thursday, Dec. 22, 2011 in Washington. Republican leaders in the House of Representatives abruptly caved in and agreed to demands by President Barack Obama, congressional Democrats and fellow Republicans for a two-month extension of tax cuts for all workers. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

NKorea media dubs young Kim 'outstanding leader'

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — The handover of power in North Korea to Kim Jong Il's young son appeared to be going smoothly, with official media calling him the "outstanding leader" and no outward unrest in the capital or troop movements along its borders.

Foreign governments have focused intense scrutiny on North Korea since Kim's death was announced Monday because of concerns over his untested heir's rise in a country with a nuclear program, 1.2-million strong military and a history of deep animosity toward its neighbors.

But the capital remained a scene of mourning — not protest — on Thursday. U.S. and South Korean military officials said there had been no unusual military movements by the North Koreans in recent days.

"This appears to be a relatively smooth transition on the peninsula, and we hope it stays that way," Pentagon spokesman George Little said in Washington, adding that there has been no increase in force protection levels for U.S. troops in South Korea.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak sought to assure Pyongyang that his country was "not hostile," despite putting its front-line troops on alert since Kim's death was announced. South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Yoon Won-sik said North Korea's military isn't showing any particular movement and that the South's troops are operating normally despite the alert.

In a clear signal to North Korea's people and the outside world, the North's main newspaper Rodong Sinmun in a lengthy editorial urged the country to "rally, rally and rally behind great comrade Kim Jong Un and faithfully uphold his leadership."

It called him "the outstanding leader of our party, military and people and a great successor."

Ratcheting up the personality cult it builds around the Kim family, North Korea



A group of women march to mourn the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il at the North Korean Embassy in Beijing, China, Thursday, Dec. 22, 2011. All signs out of North Korea suggest the transition of power to Kim's son is going smoothly, with no unusual troop movements and no buildup around the heavily fortified border, U.S. and South Korean defense officials said Thursday.

(AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

claimed that Kim Jong Il's death generated a series of spectacular natural phenomena, creating a mysterious glow atop a revered mountain, cracking a sheet of ice on a lake with a loud roar and inspiring a crane to circle a statue of the nation's founder before perching in a tree and drooping its head in sorrow. Dramatic scenes of mourning in the capital have continued nearly nonstop since Monday's announcement of Kim's death, which the government says happened two days earlier when he suffered a massive heart attack while on a train.

Mourning sites have been arranged in provincial, city and county seats and institutions and enterprises

across the country.

"The sorrow at the loss of our leader is tremendous. But we would not stay in grief only," said Sok Kil Nam, 24, a steel worker. "We will rise up to carry out last teachings of Kim Jong Il. As long as we have great comrade Kim Jong Un, the cause of the respected General Kim Jong Il will go on, so we continue working, not leaving our work sites."

Outside powers, including the United States, Japan and South Korea, are watching with keen interest to see how the transition proceeds.

Communication between the United States and North Korea still appears open as the North continues its official 11-day mourning period. □

16 killed in violence in Mexican state

VERACRUZ, Mexico (AP) —

A group of five gunmen sprayed three passenger buses with bullets in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz on Thursday, killing seven passengers, before being chased down and killed by soldiers.

Veracruz state government spokeswoman Gina Dominguez said the gunmen apparently resisted detention and died in the ensuing confrontation. They all had rifles and were traveling in a bulletproof vehicle.

While the attackers' identities and cartel affiliation have not yet been established, the men killed match witness descriptions of the assailants in the bus attacks, Dominguez said.

Earlier, gunmen killed four people in the town of El Higo in northern Veracruz, where drug gangs have been particularly active, but Dominguez said those killings appear not to have been related to the bus attacks. The bloody pre-Christmas bus shootings brought up memories of the brutal murder of dozens of bus passengers whose bodies were found in mass graves in the neighboring state of Tamaulipas in April. A total of 193 bodies had been found in



People with masks that read in Spanish "Without name," wearing T-shirts with red stains simulating blood, lie on the floor as they participate in a protest of relatives of Mexicans who migrated to the U.S. outside Mexico's National Migration Institute in Mexico City. Protesters demanded that Mexico's authorities do more to guarantee the human rights of migrants in Mexico and the U.S.

(AP Photo/Marco Ugarte)

26 graves, and officials say most of those were Mexican migrants heading to the United States who were kidnapped off buses and killed by the Zetas drug cartel. But there appeared to be differences between Thursday's killings and the murders in Tamaulipas.

In the Tamaulipas killings, the Zetas gunmen stopped and boarded buses and removed male passengers

and killed them, either because they believed a rival gang was trying to send reinforcements into the region aboard buses or because they wanted to force some of the passengers to join their gang.

Thursday's attacks on buses may have been more random; the gunmen apparently just sprayed passing buses with gunfire. The buses hit were covering lo-

cal routes in northern Veracruz, though authorities did not release the names of the bus lines operating the route. There was no immediate information on the identity of the dead bus passengers, or the four people killed in El Higo. The area has been the scene of bloody battles between the Zetas and their former allies, the Gulf cartel. The two gangs split in 2010. □

In Islamic law, Gingrich sees a mortal threat to U.S.

SCOTT SHANE © 2011 New York Times

WASHINGTON – Long before he announced his presidential run this year, Newt Gingrich had become the most prominent U.S. politician to embrace an alarming premise: that Shariah, or Islamic law, poses a threat to the United States as grave as or graver than terrorism.

"I believe Shariah is a mortal threat to the survival of freedom in the United States and in the world as we know it," Gingrich said in a speech to the American Enterprise Institute in Washington in July 2010 devoted to what he suggested were the hidden dangers of Islamic radicalism. "I think it's that straightforward and that real."

Gingrich was articulating a much-disputed thesis in vogue with some conservative thinkers but roundly rejected by many U.S. Muslims, scholars of Islam and counterterrorism officials. The anti-Shariah theorists say that just as communism posed an ideological and moral threat to America separate from the menace of Soviet missiles, so today radical Islamists are working to impose Shariah in a "stealth jihad" that is no less dangerous than the violent jihad of al-Qaida.

"Stealth jihadis use political, cultural, societal, religious, intellectual tools; violent jihadis use violence," Gingrich said in the speech. "But in fact they're both engaged in jihad, and they're both seeking to impose the same end state, which is to replace Western civilization with a radical imposition of Shariah." Echoing some Republicans in Congress, Gingrich blasted the Obama administration's policy of declining to label terrorism carried out in the name of militant Islam as "Islamic" or "jihadist." Administration officials say such labels can imply religious justification for a distortion of doctrine that most Muslims abhor, thus smearing an entire faith. But to Gingrich, whose campaign did not respond to a request for comment, the administration's language smacks of the will-

ful blindness of an earlier era. "The left's refusal to tell the truth about the Islamist

debate over the growing power of Islamists in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. But those

less than 1 percent of the population, strikes many scholars as quixotic.

servatives fear, let alone adopting such ancient prescriptions as stoning for adulterers, said Akbar Ahmed, chairman of Islamic studies at American University in Washington, who spent a year traveling the United States and interviewing Muslims for his 2010 book "Journey into America: The Challenge of Islam."

The notion of a threat from Shariah to the United States "takes your breath away, it's so absurd," Ahmed said. He sees political demagoguery in the anti-Shariah campaign, which fueled rallies against mosques in the last two years from Manhattan to Tennessee. All of the Republican presidential candidates have been asked about the supposed threat from Shariah. Rep. Michele Bachmann told the conservative Family Research Council in a November speech that Shariah "must be resisted across the United States," endorsing moves by several states to prohibit judges from considering Shariah. □



Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, and his wife, Callista, arrive at a campaign event at a hotel in Arlington, Va., on Dec. 22, 2011. Long before he announced his presidential run, Gingrich was the most prominent American politician to embrace the premise that Islamic law poses a threat to the United States as grave as terrorism.
(Philip Scott Andrews/The New York Times)

threat is a natural parallel to the 70-year pattern of left-wing intellectuals refusing to tell the truth about communism and the Soviet Union," Gingrich said.

Shariah (literally, "the path to the watering place") is a central concept in Islam. It is God's law, as derived from the Quran and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, and has far wider application than secular law. It is popularly associated with its most extreme application in societies like Afghanistan under the Taliban, including chopping off a hand as punishment for thievery. But it has always been subject to interpretation by religious authorities, so its application has varied over time and geography, said Bernard G. Weiss, professor emeritus at the University of Utah and an authority on Islamic law. "In the hands of terrorists, Shariah can be developed into a highly threatening, militant notion," Weiss said. "In the hands of a contemporary Muslim thinker writing in the journal Religion and Law, Shariah becomes an essentially pacifist notion."

The Arab Spring has set off a lively political and scholarly

are all overwhelmingly Muslim countries. The idea that Shariah poses a danger in the United States, where the census pegs Muslims as

Even within that 1 percent, most U.S. Muslims have no enthusiasm for replacing federal and state law with Shariah, as some con-



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In the Ivy League, athletics catching up to academics

BILL PENNINGTON

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The eight Ivy League colleges, renowned for their academics, were also once among the country's highest achieving athletic institutions, with national champions and multiple prominent and ranked sports teams.

But that was 70 or 80 years ago, right?

This month, the Harvard men's basketball team, which has played the sport for more than a century, was ranked in the nation's top 25 for the first time. For two months last season, the Yale men's ice hockey team was No. 1 in the country. Cornell's wrestling team was No. 1 throughout the same winter, one year after the Cornell men's basketball team advanced to the final 16 of the NCAA tournament.

In the last two years, the Ivy League has produced 108 first-team all-Americans and won numerous individual national championships. Nineteen of its athletes competed at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, and

10 won medals.

This renaissance in a league known as the Ancient Eight

that have substantially enhanced financial aid for all admitted students, making

The Ivy League does not award athletic scholarships, but led by endowment-rich

of millions of dollars in additional need-based aid — with most of the universities all but eliminating student loans and essentially doubling the size of grants meant for middle-income families.

The financial aid enhancements have had a profound effect on the quality of athletic recruits. Rosters are now fortified with top athletes who would have spurned the Ivy League in the past because they would have been asked to pay \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year more than at other colleges.

"We're seeing a significant change in the caliber of the student-athlete," said Steve Bilsky, the University of Pennsylvania's athletic director, one of more than 50 Ivy League administrators and coaches interviewed. "It's not even the same population because the pool has widened. We see a considerable number of student-athletes turning down athletic scholarships from places like Stanford, Northwestern or Duke to come to Penn." □



Yale University volleyball player Erica Reetz (6) forms a circle with teammates after an NCAA match against the University of Southern California at the Galen Center in Los Angeles. New and substantially enhanced financial aid policies aimed at all admitted students have made it easier to recruit elite athletes to the Ivy League, coaches and athletic administrators said.

(Christine Cotter/The New York Times)

can be traced to something that has nothing to do with sports: new policies

it easier to recruit elite athletes, coaches and athletic administrators said.

members like Harvard, Yale and Princeton, the conference has spent hundreds

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Occupy protesters sue over free speech, force

ERIKA NIEDOWSKI

Associated Press

Most major Occupy Wall Street encampments in the U.S. have been dispersed, but they live on in a flurry of lawsuits in which protesters are asserting their constitutional rights to free speech and assembly and challenging authorities' use of force to break up tent cities.

Lawyers representing protesters have filed lawsuits — or are planning them — in state and federal courts from coast to coast, challenging eviction orders and what they call heavy-handed police tactics and the banning of demonstrators from public properties. Some say the fundamental right of protest has been criminalized in places, with protesters

facing arrest and charges while doing nothing more than exercising protected rights to demonstrate.

"When I think about the tents as an expression of

the First Amendment here, I compare it to Tahrir Square in Egypt," said Carol Sobel, co-chairwoman of the National Lawyers Guild's Mass Defense Committee. □



Occupy Albany protesters form a human chain around their information tent in Academy Park in Albany, N.Y., as police cleared the park of tents on Thursday, Dec. 22, 2011. Occupy Albany's 24-hour park permit expired Thursday morning.

(AP Photo/Mike Groll)

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Social issues bubbling up in Republican campaign

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Mitt Romney is forced to defend his opposition to same-sex marriage. Newt Gingrich endorses a pledge to be faithful to his wife. Rick Perry runs an ad noting he's against gays serving openly in the military, and abortion may take center stage Wednesday.

Three weeks before Iowa's leadoff caucuses, cultural issues that have been virtually dormant in this Republican presidential campaign are bursting to the forefront as social conservatives — who make up the core of GOP primary voters and haven't rallied behind any one contender — search for a candidate who shares their views.

"Everyone knows what Iowans want to hear and they will be willing to say those things," said the Rev. Brad Cranston of Burlington, who is backing Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann. "But I think it's important that we examine their records."

Almost daily now, Republican front-runners Gingrich and Romney are answering for records and backgrounds that are flawed in the eyes of these voters. And Republicans rivals

looking to revive their struggling campaigns — like Perry — are turning ever more to topics that resonate strongly with this powerful segment of their party's pri-

inson of New Hampshire, the Episcopal Church's first openly gay bishop, assailed Perry for using gay and lesbian soldiers as "as political cannon fodder for his

economy this year, among even the most vocal social conservatives. Many want a candidate who firmly shares their beliefs, but it's most important that they find someone who can fix the economy — and defeat President Barack Obama. A recent New York Times/CBS News poll found that among evangelicals in Iowa, 55 percent said a candidate's positions on economic issues were most important to them. Only 25 percent said social issues were their top priority. It was even more lopsided among all likely caucus-goers: 71 percent said the economy was issue one and 14 percent cited social concerns.

Today, the two Republicans at the top of polls in Iowa and elsewhere have baggage that makes cultural conservatives skeptical.

Romney, a Mormon, has a record of equivocating or reversing himself on a series of social issues, including gay and abortion rights, and his faith concerns some evangelical voters. Gingrich has been married three times and has acknowledged infidelity. Both have sought over the years to make amends with these voters but their pasts raise

questions about whether they are sincere when they now say they'll uphold issues social conservatives hold dear.

So both are working to allay those concerns — and draw distinctions with each other.

Romney has been trying to make himself more acceptable than Gingrich, the leading alternative, by pressing family values and highlighting his home life and, to a point, his faith. The strategy means more time on the campaign trail for his wife Ann, and five sons.

"I've been married to the same woman for 25 — excuse me, I'll get in trouble — for 42 years. I've been in the same church my entire life," he said in a recent debate, a clip that was turned into a TV ad. "If I'm president of the United States, I will be true to my family, to my faith, and to our country."

It's a pitch at least partly intended to differentiate himself from the thrice-married Gingrich who converted to Catholicism in recent years. Gingrich, for his part, is trying to insulate himself from questions about — or attacks on — his personal life. □



Republican presidential candidate, former Mass. Gov. Mitt Romney shakes hands with Dennis Legere while campaigning in a Berlin, N.H. neighborhood, Thursday Dec. 22, 2011.

(AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

mary electorate in hopes of becoming their preferred candidate. "There's something wrong in this country when gays can serve openly in the military but our kids can't openly celebrate Christmas or pray in school," Perry, the Texas governor, says in a TV ad blanketing Iowa ahead of the state's Jan. 3 caucuses. In a column published Tuesday, Bishop Gene Rob-

campaign" in "an attempt to garner conservative Christian votes." Abortion opposition will be the issue of the day Wednesday, when Gingrich, Bachmann, Perry and Rick Santorum attend a screening of Mike Huckabee's anti-abortion documentary. Cultural issues like those — typically a driving force in a Republican primary — largely have taken a back seat to the

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Ahead of holiday, heyday for bargain hunters

STEPHANIE CLIFFORD
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Half off at the entire store at Ann Taylor.

Sixty percent at Gap. Forty percent off almost everything at Abercrombie & Fitch.

Aggressive last-minute deals in the days before Christmas are good for procrastinators but could be an alarm bell for the retail industry.

While scattered markdowns are standard every year, discounts across entire stores – which analysts say are more widespread than last year – suggest merchants are stuck with too much merchandise.

"It's really a game of chicken," said David Bassuk, managing director and head of the retail practice

at the consultant firm Alix Partners.

Many retailers entered the

season "with pretty optimistic plans" that shoppers would rush into stores and

pay full price, Bassuk said. But that did not pan out, and the final days before Christmas have retailers being "much more aggressive in terms of promotions being offered," he said. Shoppers are filling their holiday lists against the backdrop of an uncertain year, with stubbornly high unemployment, increased food prices, volatile gas prices and unpredictability from the stock market and Europe's debt crisis.

The government Thursday said that third-quarter economic growth had not been as brisk as it previously estimated, because of a drop in consumer spending on services like health care. Toys "R" Us announced Thursday new deals on dozens of items for Friday

and Saturday, including "buy one, get one half off" on popular toys like Legos. A sampling of other promotions:

Up to 70 percent off toys at Amazon; up to 50 percent off gifts at Restoration Hardware; 40 percent off almost everything at American Eagle Outfitters, Talbots, Limited and Wet Seal; and 30 percent off everything at J.Crew.

"There's been kind of a waiting game with retailers," Gerald L. Storch, the chief executive of Toys "R" Us, told CNBC last week. "And it looks like the consumer wins."

Paul Lejuez, an analyst at Nomura Equity Research, surveyed mall deals over the weekend and said he was concerned.

"It looks like 40 percent is the new level you have to be at, 40 percent off, to drive traffic.

Those that weren't at that level weren't getting their fair share," he said.

Going into the holiday season, inventories had grown more than three times as fast as sales at several retailers, including American Eagle Outfitters, Aeropostale, Gap Inc., Urban Outfitters, Chico's and Talbots.

"If inventory is growing ahead of sales growth, there is a need to be more promotional to move the goods," Lejuez said.

Although sales over Thanksgiving weekend were surprisingly strong, Lejuez said they seemed to have cut into shopping that more typically would occur in December.

Sales were sluggish the first two weeks after Thanksgiving, although they improved in the third week, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers. □



Sale signs posted in the window of a Ann Taylor store in New York, Dec. 22, 2011. While scattered markdowns are standard every year, discounts across entire stores, which analysts say are more widespread than last year, suggest merchants are stuck with too much merchandise.

(Tina Fineberg/The New York Times)

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Social-minded hip-hop is making a comeback



Common performs at the Highline Ballrom in New York. Two performances this week, one by Kendrick Lamar, at S.O.B.'s and Common's, showed that message-driven hip-hop has begun to find a home again.

(Chad Batka/The New York Times)

JON CARAMANICA
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In May, when a rapper was invited to perform at the White House as part of an evening devoted to poetry, it was met with predictable conservative outrage. That the kerfuffle was over Common, the most neutered of all rappers, only underscored the bad faith beneath the squawking. Still, the episode was a reminder that rap – the idea alone – can still rattle nerves well into its middle age. This week Common ruffled different conservative feathers when Maya Angelou, who appears on his new album, "The Dreamer/The Believer" (Warner Brothers), expressed dissatisfaction that the song she contributed to also features Common's use of a certain racial epithet. Only conservatives of a certain generation could mistake Common for a firebrand of any sort, though in the context of contempo-

rary hip-hop, his interest in uplift is what really makes him a dissenter. Two decades ago, at the outset of his career, those interests didn't set Common apart from his peers; it made him a man of the times. Socially conscious hip-hop was a viable career choice then, a tradition that's been more or less killed, rendered irrelevant with hip-hop's pervasive cross-over success. If there were a time for its comeback, though, it would be now, in the face of occupations, of continued recession, of deflated idealism. And yet current economic realities have made almost no mark on hip-hop this year. Preaching, which would have been a perfectly acceptable mode in the 1990s, would likely be all but ignored in today's hip-hop. Instead the battle lines have been redrawn in novel ways, and message-

driven hip-hop has begun to find a home again, not just on the fringes, but near the center of the genre. Nowhere is that clearer than in the success of Kendrick Lamar, a young rapper from Compton, Calif., and a vivid stylist who's succeeding possibly in spite of his thoughtfulness. Last summer, he released "Section.80" (Top Dawg), a startlingly beautiful album that recalls the early- to mid-'90s semiactivist jazz-influenced hip-hop of Digable Planets and, crucially, the Los Angeles underground heroes Freestyle Fellowship, who took their social concerns and created new ways of rapping to reflect them. In a coincidence of scheduling on Monday night, Common performed at the Highline Ballroom and Lamar at SOB's, showing the contrast between being socially minded then and now. There's an ease to Common's presence that's inclusionary; his vision

is earnest and open. "I'm to hip-hop what Obama is to politics," Common raps on his new album – groan. Righteousness is not its own aesthetic reward. There was something wily about Lamar during his performance, though. He's an enlightened thinker, but hardly a preacher. Nor is he flamboyant in his beliefs. He is, however, committed and savvy, an

artist putting his ample charisma in the service of greater ideas. Sometimes he's straightforward – his song "No Make-Up (Her Vice)" is the sort of empowerment anthem that will be familiar to any longtime fan of Common's romantic side. But the songs that received the most enthusiastic response during this show were the difficult ones, like "A.D.H.D." □

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Explosions rock Baghdad amid Iraqi political crisis

JACK HEALY
MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT
TIM ARANGO

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BAGHDAD — A wave of coordinated explosions ripped across Baghdad early Thursday, killing at least 63 people, wounding more than 180 and jolting a country already unsettled by a deepening political crisis and the absence of American troops.

Using car bombs and improvised explosives, insurgents attacked markets, grocery stores, schools and government buildings in a dozen neighborhoods in the central and eastern parts of the capital.

The attacks were the most significant violence in Iraq since the last American

troops pulled out of the country earlier this week. So far, the withdrawal and the bitter fighting between Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, and his political foes in Parliament have not been accompanied by a rise in violence. But Thursday's attacks raised the specter that the crisis inside the government could spill into the streets.

The attacks came a day after al-Maliki threatened to abandon an American-backed power-sharing government created a year ago. The prime minister's words at a televised news conference Wednesday threw a fragile democracy into further turmoil after the departure of American troops, potentially tar-

nishing what has been cast as a major foreign policy achievement for President Barack Obama.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks Thursday but they appeared similar to others conducted by the insurgent group, al-Qaida in Iraq, which has tried to plunge the country back into a sectarian war by pitting Sunnis and Shiites against each other.

"This has nothing to do with the American withdrawal," said Abdul Kareem Thirib, the head of the security committee for Baghdad's provincial council. "When they were here, there were also explosions. We were the ones in control of the streets when the Americans were here. I think there will be more cowardly attacks in the coming days, but we will face them and everything will be under control." He added, "They are trying to send a message to say that 'we are still here.'"



Ammar Thayaaldeem, with blanket, who says he rescued his badly-injured brother from a building after a bomb blast, in Baghdad, Dec. 22, 2011. A wave of coordinated explosions ripped across Baghdad early on Thursday, killing at least 63 people, wounding more than 180 and jolting a country already unsettled by a deepening political crisis and the absence of American troops.
(Michael Kamber/The New York Times)

The attacks began around 6:30 a.m., as Iraqis were leaving for work and blasted apart stores just as shopkeepers were opening their metal gates.

The most deadly attack occurred in the bustling neighborhood of Karada, where a car bomb aimed at offices for the government's integrity committee killed

13 people and wounded 36. Medics and volunteers at the scene did not have enough stretchers for the wounded and dead so they slung bleeding bodies into blankets. Nearby apartment buildings were ripped apart and store windows were shattered as far as 10 blocks from the blast site. □



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Moody's cuts credit ratings for Slovenia

The Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)

— Moody's Investors Service has downgraded the credit ratings for Slovenia, saying the country's government faces risks from the eurozone debt crisis and the potential that it may need to step in and provide financial support to banks. The ratings firm on Thursday lowered the Balkan nation's local and foreign currency government bond ratings by one notch to "A1" from "Aa3." It has a negative outlook on the ratings. The move comes amid growing uncertainty over the prospects for eurozone countries to contain the region's debt crisis. Moody's said the eurozone

debt and funding crisis has exposed significant vulnerabilities in the largest financial institutions in Slovenia. The firm noted that, since the outset of the crisis, Slovenian banks have needed the government to provide debt guarantees and capital. Slovenia will have to provide much more support to its banks in the future, because the lenders' assets, profitability and funding needs are expected to continue, Moody's said. Under one scenario studied by the firm, Slovenia would potentially need to provide between 2 percent and 8 percent of gross domestic product in coming years to support its largest banks. Moody's also sees great-

er risks that the Slovenian economy will not grow in the medium-term as companies, people and sectors of the government roll back spending.

Another concern is the volatile funding conditions of eurozone bond markets, which represents a risk to Slovenia, should the its financing needs exceed original estimates.

Moody's downgrades Slovenia's credit ratings to A1, negative outlook

Last week, Fitch Ratings placed the ratings for all eurozone nations, including Slovenia, under review for a possible downgrade. Fitch said it expects to complete the review by the end of January. □

Shell oil spill off Nigeria likely worst in decade

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — An oil spill near the coast of Nigeria is likely the worst to hit those waters in a decade, a government official said Thursday, as slicks from the Royal Dutch Shell PLC spill approached the country's southern shoreline.

The slick from Shell's Bonga field has affected 115 miles (185 kilometers) of ocean near Nigeria's coast, Peter Idabor, who leads the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, told The Associated Press. Idabor said the slick continued to move toward the shore Thursday night, putting at risk birds, fish and other wildlife in the area.

Shell, the major oil producer in Nigeria, said late Thursday the spill came from a "flexible export line" connecting the offshore field to a waiting tanker. The company published photographs of the spill, showing a telltale rainbow sheen in the ocean, but said it believes that about 50 percent of the leaked oil has already evaporated.

The source of the leak has been plugged and experts from Britain were coming to help with the cleanup, Idabor said. Nigerian Navy ships also had been sent into the area to help control the spill, he said.

Shell estimates the Bonga spill likely was less than 40,000 barrels, or 1.68 mil-

lion gallons. That's about the same amount of oil spilled offshore in 1998 at

places where the sheen is the thickest.

However, the size of the



A shanty town off the coast of Nigeria. An oil spill near the coast of Nigeria is likely the worst to hit those waters in a decade, a government official said Thursday, as slicks from the Royal Dutch Shell PLC spill approached the country's southern shoreline. JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

a Mobil field. The 1998 spill saw oil slicks extended for more than 100 miles (some 160 kilometers) to Lagos, the country's commercial capital.

"Since the Mobil spill, this is just about the most major one," Idabor said.

Nigerian authorities hope to use oil booms and chemicals to disperse or collect the spilled oil, Idabor said. In a statement, Shell said its Nigerian subsidiary already had sent ships out to the slick to use dispersant on the oil sheen. The company also said it would use infrared equipment to trace

spill may be even larger. SkyTruth, a nonprofit group based in West Virginia that uses satellite imagery to detect environmental problems, estimated the oil spill might stretch across roughly 350 square miles (920 square kilometers) of ocean — three times what Nigerian authorities believe. "The spill could be near the upper limit of what Shell has stated," John Amos, SkyTruth's founder and president, told the AP on Thursday. However, he said he needed more information to determine the spill's true scope.

Bonga sits about 75 miles (120 kilometers) off Nigeria's coast. It can produce about 200,000 barrels of

oil and 150 million cubic feet of gas a day, according to Shell's Nigerian subsidiary. Production at the field, which Shell operates in partnership with Italy's Eni SpA, Exxon Mobil Corp., France's Total SA and the state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corp., has been halted since the discovery of the spill.

Environmentalists blame Shell and other foreign oil firms for polluting the country's oil-rich Niger Delta. Some environmentalists say as much as 550 million gallons of oil poured into the delta during Shell's roughly 50 years of production in Nigeria — a rate roughly comparable to one Exxon Valdez disaster per year. □

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ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS 3

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matinee: 12.00 - 2.00
late show: 11.00

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NEW YEARS EVE

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matinee: 12.00 - 2.45
late show: 11.00

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YOUNG ADULT

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matinee: 1.15 - 3.45
late show: 11.15

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Jamaica asked to ensure access for disabled voters

DAVID McFADDEN

Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)

— A human rights group on Thursday called on Jamaica to take fast action to ensure that disabled voters across the island can cast ballots in next week's parliamentary elections.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a Thursday statement that Jamaica should relocate some voting centers, allow absentee ballots, and move ballot boxes to the ground floor to make them accessible for citizens with disabilities, among other measures.

"Jamaica should not get away with simply saying that it's too late now and will cost too much. While it may be difficult to do everything necessary before next week's elections, it should do whatever it can to enable voters with disabilities to cast their ballots," said Rebecca Schleifer, an advocacy director



A soldier stands guard as voters line up outside a polling station, holding election propaganda of then parliamentary candidate Andrew Holness, in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica. Symbiotic relationships between politicians and criminals have long been the rule in sprawling slums known as garrisons, which were separated into areas loyal both to underworld bosses and one of the island's two parties. Now Jamaica's new prime minister, Holness, is saying it's time to put an end to "garrison politics."

(AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa, File)

for the rights group.

Like other countries in the region, Jamaica lacks the technology to let people with visual or physical impairments to cast their ballots in secret, such as voting kiosks equipped with head-

phones or a touch pad. It does not offer braille ballots and most disabled voters have to rely on another person to vote.

Typically, a trusted relative helps but sometimes a disabled person has to rely

on a complete stranger, which can lead to disenfranchisement.

Complicating matters, some polling centers install their ballot boxes on the second floor of the school or other public building

where ballots are cast.

Elections Director Orrette Fisher said he could not comment on the statement by Human Rights Watch because he had not read it, but he insisted that electoral authorities have been doing their best to make things easier for disabled voters ahead of the Dec. 29 elections. "As far as possible, we try to locate voting on the ground floor," Fisher said.

Gloria Goffe, a blind Jamaican who works as coordinator for the island's Combined Disabilities Association, said the country has "some ways to go before we can say voting is truly accessible" for the more than 163,000 disabled Jamaicans. At a recent meeting with her association, government officials pledged to build temporary ramps to voting centers, which are often set up in schools and other buildings without easy access for disabled people. It was

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Russia and US clash over NATO bombing probe



Russian President Dmitry Medvedev delivers his last state-of-the-nation address in Moscow's Kremlin on Thursday, Dec. 22, 2011. Russia urged the U.N. Security Council on Thursday to investigate civilian deaths in Libya from NATO's bombing campaign, a move the United States immediately dismissed as "a cheap stunt" to distract from Moscow's failure to condemn the Syrian government's ongoing killing of protesters.

(AP Photo/Misha Japaridze)

EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia urged the U.N. Security Council on Thursday to investigate civilian deaths in Libya from NATO's bombing campaign, a move the United States immediately dismissed as "a cheap stunt" to distract from Moscow's failure to condemn the Syrian government's ongoing killing of protesters.

The sharp exchange reflected the deep division in the council over the NATO campaign which the U.S., France, Germany and others hailed for saving hundreds of thousands of Libyan lives, but which Russia, China and the African Union have strongly criticized.

Russia and its supporters argue that NATO misused the limited council resolution imposing a no-fly zone and authorizing the protection of civilians as a pretext to promote regime change in Libya. Libya's longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi was ousted after 42 years, captured and killed in October. Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said a council-mandated investigation is essential "given the fact that initially we were led to believe by NATO leaders there are zero civilian casualties of their bombing campaign." U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, who stepped to the microphone after Churkin, said: "Oh, the bombast and bogus claims."

"Is everyone sufficiently dis-

tracted from Syria now and the killing that is happening before our very eyes?" she said.

"I think it's not an exaggeration to say that this is something of a cheap stunt to divert attention from

other issues and to obscure the success of NATO and its partners — and indeed the Security Council — in protecting the people of Libya," Rice said.

France's U.N. Ambassador Gerard Araud, standing

beside her, said there were two ongoing investigations of NATO's actions in Libya, one by a U.N. Human Rights Council which is scheduled to report in March and the second by the International Criminal Court. □



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Turkey-France ties fray over Armenia genocide bill

ELAINE GANLEY
SUZAN FRASER

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Ties between France and Turkey, strategic allies and trading partners, abruptly unraveled Thursday after French legislators passed a bill making it a crime to deny that the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks nearly a century ago constitute genocide. The bill strikes at the heart of national honor in Turkey, which denies the genocide label and insists the 1915 massacres occurred during civil unrest as the Ottoman Empire collapsed, with losses on both sides. But it's

seen as a matter of principle for some French politicians, and a matter of long-overdue justice for the half a million people in France of Armenian descent, many of whom had relatives among the 1.5 million Armenians killed. The French bill still needs Senate approval, but after it passed the lower house, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan halted bilateral political and economic contacts, suspended military cooperation and ordered his country's ambassador home for consultations. Turkey argues France is trampling freedom of



Erdogan also said Thursday that Ankara was halting military cooperation between the two countries by suspending joint maneuvers and restricting French military flights.

(AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

expression and that French President Nicolas Sarkozy is on a vote-getting mission before April presidential elections. France formally recognized the 1915 killings as genocide in 2001, but provided no penalty for anyone refuting that. The bill passed Thursday sets a punishment of up to one year in prison and a fine of €45,000 (\$59,000) for those who deny or "outrageously minimize" the killings, putting such action on par with denial of the Holocaust.

The diplomatic riposte by Turkey over the vote by lawmakers in France's lower house, the National Assembly, may get even tougher. It hurts ties as both NATO members are involved in international efforts for peace from Syria to Afghanistan. "Our measures and precautions will come to life stage-by-stage according to France's position," Erdogan told reporters in Ankara. France expressed regret over Turkey's response. "It is important, in the current context, that we keep the paths of dialogue and cooperation open," Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said in a statement. Strains have plagued the relationship between Paris and Ankara in recent years, in large part because Sarkozy opposes mostly-Muslim Turkey's bid to join the European Union. The bill reached the French parliament after Sarkozy visited Armenia in October and urged Turkey, "a great country" to "honor itself by revisiting its history like other countries in the world have done." □

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AAA has a new Director of Operations: Mr. Jurgen Benschop



ORANJESTAD - On December 22nd, 2011, in the presence of the Minister of Tourism and Transportation Mr. Otmar Oduber, the president of the Board of Supervisory Directors Members of AAA Mrs. Marion Kan and the CEO of AAA Mr. Peter Steinmetz it was announced that AAA now has a new Director of Operations:

Mr. Jurgen Benschop. As per January 1, 2012 Mr. Peter Steinmetz as CEO and Mr. Jurgen Benschop as Director of Operations will jointly form the Board of Directors of the Aruba Airport Authority N.V. Mr. Benschop is currently the Business Unit Manager Airside and has performed this job for a few years now. Mr. Benschop has

ample experience in the airport business. He was born in Aruba and continued his studies in the US. Mr. Benschop started his career at the airport 15 years ago as operations attendant and has grown throughout the years in the airport industry. We wish the 37 year old Director of Operations lots of luck in his new position! □



Divi Village is proud to show off its new lobby



Druif Beach – Divi Village opened the new lobby without much fanfare, but with great pride. The spacious new facility was also designed to serve guests checking into the Divi Links Residences and the Dutch Village. With tall ceilings, large fans, natural wood beams, rough-cut stone walls, and open windows and doors, the lobby allows the tropical exterior to become an integral part of the structure.

While the center stage is occupied by a user-friendly front desk, the right wing is dedicated to timeshare sales and the left wing to a sunken lobby bar with comfortable seating and an upstairs round lounge hanging just below the tree tops, overlooking the sunsets on the beach and the 9th hole lagoon.

General Manager Ger-

rit Griffith who recently won the Shoco, Lifetime Achievement Award for excellence in tourism was on hand to welcome guests at check in and the local taxi drivers, visiting the new lobby for the first time. NAlso opening later in January, the Alhambra Mall, s lovely cluster of more than a dozen dining and shopping outlets including a food court featuring Subway, Dunkin'

Donuts and Little Caesars Pizza with air-conditioned indoor or tropical outdoor seating, a mini market, The Lazy Lizard gift store, Fusion, a stylish Jazz & Cigar Wine Lounge, and Ginger, Divi's own famed Asian-Fusion restaurant, serving eclectic, exotic dishes in a chic and contemporary setting. The mall is open from the early afternoon to late in the evening. □





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Westin associates celebrate the season



PALM BEACH — The annual year-end holiday celebration for all management and associates of the Westin Resort & Casino, Aruba

was held last week, with several hundred in attendance. Held in one of the resort's two grand ball-



rooms, guests enjoyed a bountiful buffet prepared by the Westin's famed culinary team led by Executive Chef Matt Boland.

Holiday favorites like roasted turkey, ham, tenderloin, and of course, traditional ayacas, were enjoyed, with a mammoth



dessert display wowing all. Live music kept everyone on the dance floor until the wee hours of the morning. □





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And what can be more special than having dinner at fabulous Papillon Restaurant in The Village, across from the Radisson Resort?

Papillon, named after the thrilling adventures of the world's most famous convict, offers adventurous, delicious cuisine, which is winking at Henri Charrière's (alias Papillon) travels throughout the Caribbean in his efforts to escape various prisons in French Guyana in the 1930 and '40s. Chef Bas Kuurstra is a master in thinking up wonderful dishes and during the Christmas season he is always in top form. So check



him out!

One can opt to go all the way with a 5-course menu, including the complimentary Amuse Bouche of foie

gras mousse, red fruits, a butter crouton and a balsamic reduction, or one can order the menu options separately. So start with the Entrée Froide of deer

carpaccio with rocket lettuce and cherry tomatoes, mushrooms and Gruyère, followed by a game consommé with mushrooms, herbs, a puff pastry and

truffles.

The entrée of Papillon's Christmas menu is rack of lamb, veal loin, roasted pumpkins, green asparagus, mashed potatoes, a hollandaise sauce and a Pinot Noir reduction. And then there is a lovely cheese platter, the French way, with pumpkin bread, dried fruits and nuts to shock your palate and prepare it for a sumptuous dessert, which is a hot chocolate cake with cinnamon ice cream, almonds and stewed pears. The price of the 5-course extravagant Christmas dinner is US \$ 79.50, service charge not included.

Be sure to make reservations for your culinary Christmas adventure at Papillon at 586-5400.

And now it is time for the good wishes: we hope that your Holidays will be spectacular, filled with lots of laughter and happiness. Enjoy your dinner at Papillon! □

We wish you a

*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year*

Djokovic: Belief is the secret to repeating success

In this Sept. 12, 2011 file photo, Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts after winning the men's championship match against Rafael Nadal of Spain at the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York.

Associated Press
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In this photo provided by the Heisman Trophy Trust, Robert Griffin III, of Baylor University, holds the Heisman Trophy award after being named the winner, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2011, in New York.

Associated Press

Baylor's Griffin is AP college player of the year

By STEPHEN HAWKINS

WACO, Texas (AP) — Robert Griffin III played football for years simply because he was good at it.

Then Baylor's exciting dual-threat quarterback tore the ACL in his right knee and missed the last nine games of the 2009 season. While stuck on the sideline watching, he realized just how much he loved the game.

"After a knee injury like that, a lot of times you see guys come back and it's not the same," Griffin said. "So I didn't want that to be attached to me, great player, got hurt, never was the same. ... My goal was to come back better, not only for myself, but for my teammates."

Continued on Page 19

BROKEN WINGS

Luongo, Burrows lift Canucks past Red Wings, 4-2

Detroit Red Wings right wing Daniel Cleary (11) tries to get a shot past Vancouver Canucks goalie Roberto Luongo (1) during third period NHL hockey action at Rogers Arena in Vancouver, British Columbia, Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011.

Associated Press
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Djokovic steps up to dominate men's tennis in 2011

CAROLINE CHEESE

AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic is about to find out what it takes to follow up on a nearly unbeatable season.

The 24-year-old Serb won three of the four Grand Slams titles, lifted seven other trophies and wrested the No. 1 ranking from Rafael Nadal. His 70-6 record included a staggering 41-match winning streak to begin the season.

"It was incredible," Djokovic said. "I made so many wins in a row that I really didn't count any more. I was just trying to play one match at the time and trying to think how long the streak will go on, not when it will end."

Djokovic eventually fell one short of matching John McEnroe's record of 42 straight wins to begin the 1985 season. Despite that, the American great said the tougher competition and greater athleticism in today's game made the Serb's feat "more impressive." The run also included four wins over Nadal, all in finals. Two of them came on the Spaniard's favorite clay surface. Djokovic, who won the Australian Open early in the season, finally lost in June when Roger Federer prevailed in the French Open semifinals. But the Serb quickly picked himself up and swept the Wimbledon and U.S. Open titles.



In this July 3, 2011 file photo, Serbia's Novak Djokovic kisses the trophy after defeating Spain's Rafael Nadal in the men's singles final at the All England Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon. Associated Press

In New York, Federer seemed certain to repeat his Roland Garros success. He held two match points on serve in the fifth set of their semifinal match, but Djokovic saved both — the first with a blistering forehand return winner that was one of the year's most memorable moments.

It was also the perfect demonstration of the belief that Djokovic says was the key to his dramatic improvement in 2011 after a three-year gap since his first Grand Slam title in 2008. "The truth is that this year, mentally I am more mature and a stronger player," he

said. "I believe on the court more in my qualities, more that I can win against Federer and Nadal and all the top players."

While Djokovic's confidence soared, Nadal's seemed to drain away a little more with each loss. His three titles for the season was his worst haul since 2004, and after months of complaining about the hectic calendar, Nadal left the season-ending ATP World Tour Finals stating that he had a "little bit less passion for the game."

Spain's Davis Cup win — their fifth since 2000 — at least provided a silver lin-

ing to a difficult season, but Nadal said dropping the team competition from his schedule in 2012 would be part of his mission to turn around his fortunes.

"My goal is always the same, be a better player in 2012 than I was in 2011," Nadal said. When Djokovic's phenomenal season finally took its toll on his body — four of his six losses for the year came after the U.S. Open — it wasn't Nadal who took advantage but Federer and Andy Murray. Murray, who spent the whole season in the top four but still ended it without a first Grand Slam, won

three straight titles in Asia while Federer ended the season with a 17-match winning streak which culminated in a record sixth title at the year-end championships in London.

"To win Grand Slams would be nice," Federer said of his aim for 2012. "I feel like it might be around the corner." The 16-time Grand Slam champion went through a season without a major for the first time since 2002. The failure of women's No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki to capture one of the big four tournaments was another of the season's talking points.

The 21-year-old Dane, whose boyfriend Rory McIlroy won his first golf major in 2011, finished the year as the top-ranked player thanks to six WTA Tour titles even though she didn't even reach a single Grand Slam final.

It was Petra Kvitova who was named player of the year after a breakthrough season in which she won Wimbledon, led the Czech Republic to the Fed Cup title and triumphed at the season-ending WTA Tour Championships.

"This season has been simply a dream," the 21-year-old Czech said.

Kim Clijsters won her fourth Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, while Li Na of China won her first at the French Open to become Asia's first major singles champion. □

Ferrari to unveil 2012 car in early February

FIORANO, Italy (AP) —

Coming off a miserable season in which it won only one race, Ferrari plans to introduce its completely revised 2012 car during the "the first few days of February." Ferrari President Luca Cordero di Montezemolo announced the team's plans late Wednesday at the automaker's Christmas party.

Fernando Alonso took Ferrari's only victory this year at the British Grand Prix in July. In the drivers' stand-

ings, Alonso placed fourth and teammate Felipe Massa was sixth.

"This year we showed we know how to lose, but now that's enough. It's time to start winning again," Montezemolo said.

In a September interview with The Associated Press, team principal Stefano Domenicali said Ferrari has been working "100 percent" on next year's car since July.

"It's an innovative project in which you can note the

detail," Montezemolo said. The first testing session of the new season is slated for the week of Feb. 6 in Jerez, Spain, while the opening race of 2012 is in Melbourne, Australia on March 18. Ferrari finished third in this season's constructors' standings, trailing Red Bull and McLaren. Meanwhile, Montezemolo did little to quell speculation that Massa will be replaced when his contract expires at the end of 2012.

The Brazilian hasn't won a

race since a life-threatening accident at the Hungarian GP in 2009.

"He could continue," Montezemolo said, but added that Ferrari "always looks around." "We were not happy with him and he wasn't happy with himself," Montezemolo said, according to the Gazzetta dello Sport. "But I'm confident that with a new car he'll be able to warm up the tires faster and be competitive again."

Sebastian Vettel, the Ger-

man who has won the F1 title the last two seasons with Red Bull, has indicated he would like to drive for Ferrari eventually. "He's an intelligent kid, I like how he handles himself," Montezemolo said. "Anyhow, right now I wouldn't trade Alonso for anybody because during the race he's the best driver around." Montezemolo also said that he would not pair Lewis Hamilton with Alonso, recalling their complicated partnership at McLaren in 2007. □

Ex-NFL players blame league for brain injuries

By GREG BLUESTEIN
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP)—Jamal Lewis, Dorsey Levens and two other former NFL players have sued the league over brain injuries that they say left them struggling with medical problems years after their playing days ended. Lewis and Levens, along with Fulton Kuykendall and Ryan Stewart, filed the lawsuit against the National Football League and NFL Properties LLC this week in U.S. District Court in Atlanta. The players maintain the NFL knew as early as the 1920s of the potential for concussions to harm its players but only went public last year. "The NFL has done everything in its power to hide the issue and mislead players concerning the risks associated with concussions," the players argue in the lawsuit.

"While athletes in other professional sports who had suffered concussions were being effectively 'shut down' for long periods of time or full seasons, NFL protocol was to return players who had suffered concussions to the very game in which the injury occurred," the lawsuit states. The NFL responded that it has long made player safety a priority and continues to do so.

"Any allegation that the NFL intentionally sought to mislead players has no merit," the league said in a statement to The Associated Press on Thursday. "It stands in contrast to the league's actions to better protect players and advance the science and medical understanding of the management and treatment of concussions." □

Beltran, Cardinals agree to two-year contract

R.B. FALLSTROM
AP Sports Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP)—Carlos Beltran and the World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals agreed to a two-year contract pending results of a physical, a move that would fortify the team's lineup following the departure of Albert Pujols. The team disclosed the agreement Thursday night and said it expects to make a formal announcement shortly after the holidays. KMOX, the Cardinals' flagship radio station, reported the deal is for \$26 million over two years—the same figure cited by a person familiar with the negotiations who spoke to The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because financial details of the agreement were not announced by the team.

The 34-year-old Beltran batted .300 with 22 home runs, 84 RBIs and a .385 on-base percentage for the New York Mets and San Francisco Giants this year. He likely will be the opening-day right fielder for the Cardinals next season. Lance Berkman is expected to move to first base, taking Pujols' spot.

Allen Craig, coming off an impressive postseason, gives the Cardinals another strong outfield option but will miss at least the first month while recovering from knee surgery.

A six-time All-Star, Beltran began his career with the cross-state Royals in 1998, three years after Kansas City drafted him in the second round. The switch-hitter has a .283 career batting average with 302 home runs and 1,146 RBIs.



In this July 28, 2011, file photo, San Francisco Giants' Carlos Beltran, right, and Pablo Sandoval laugh as they stretch before a baseball game against the Philadelphia Phillies in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

"Beltran is a proven outfielder who obviously has been a tough opponent against the Cardinals for many years," St. Louis general manager John Mozeliak said in a statement. □

Continued from Page 17

Goal accomplished for Griffin, who excelled while raising Baylor out of the Big 12 basement.

Already the winner of the Heisman Trophy and Davey O'Brien Award, Griffin won AP Player of the Year on Wednesday. The aspiring lawyer, who arrived at Baylor nearly four years ago as a 17-year-old after graduating high school early, is the nation's most efficient passer this season, throwing for 3,998 yards with a Big 12-leading 36 touchdowns and only six interceptions. He also ran for 644 yards and nine more scores.

Baylor (9-3) has a five-game winning streak, its longest in 20 years, going into the Alamo Bowl next week. With a win over Washington, the 15th-ranked Bears would match the school record of 10 wins set during Mike Singletary's senior season in 1980. In his comeback from injury last year, after getting a medical redshirt that means he's now a fourth-year junior, Griffin helped lead the Bears to their first Top 25 ranking since 1993 and their first bowl game

in the Big 12 era. Baylor hadn't even had a winning season in the first 14 Big 12 seasons. That year on the sideline was the toughest for Griffin and the Bears, who went from big expectations to another losing record without their star quarterback. "You miss out making plays and doing great things," Griffin said. "I missed playing, I missed practicing, but you really just miss your teammates." By time Griffin played his first game for the Bears in 2008, when at 18 he was the nation's youngest FBS starting quarterback, he was already a Big 12 champion and NCAA All-American in the 400-meter hurdles. He set an FBS record by throwing 209 passes to start his career before his first interception.

Griffin passed for 2,091 yards and 15 TDs with 843 yards and 13 more scores rushing as a freshman. But then he got hurt on the opening series of the third game of his sophomore season. He finished the first half of that game against Northwestern State on a gimpy leg, throwing for 226 yards and three touch-

downs to push the Bears ahead 41-10.

He didn't take another snap that season.

"When you don't have something and it's taken away from you, then all of a sudden you appreciate it more," coach Art Briles said. "Everything had come real fast for him, from seventh grade on up, so what it did, it let him slow down. It let him appreciate the game and understand the game, get a different feel for the game, from a spectator and from a team-member standpoint, as opposed to always being the focal point."

But Griffin is clearly the centerpiece for the Bears when he is on the field.

RG3 returned last year to throw for 3,501 yards to lead the Bears to a bowl game. He already holds 46 school records with a highlight reel that keeps getting longer.

This season started with a 50-48 victory over defending Rose Bowl champion TCU, the nation's top defense the previous three seasons. Griffin threw for 359 yards and five touchdowns in that nationally televised



This Dec. 3, 2011 file photo shows Baylor quarterback Robert Griffin III (10) finding running room behind the line of scrimmage against Texas in the first half of an NCAA college football game in Waco, Texas. Griffin III has won The Associated Press college football player of the year, adding another award to his impressive postseason haul.

Associated Press

game, but his biggest play was a 15-yard catch from receiver Kendall Wright to convert third-and-10 on the game-winning drive.

"I really liked that play," running back Terrance Ganaway said. "It wasn't a touchdown, but it meant a lot for our team right there.

That'd be my favorite play because it helped win us the game."

And set a tone for what would be an incredible season for the Bears.

After a tough stretch in October, Baylor swept through November with four consecutive victories. □

Rory McIlroy arrives on world stage in 2011

STEVE DOUGLAS

AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — A year that witnessed the passing of one European golfing legend may have heralded the arrival of another.

The death of Spanish great Seve Ballesteros in May following a three-year battle with a brain tumor hit the golfing fraternity hard, although the outpouring of grief for the popular winner of five majors extended far beyond sport.

It was fitting, then, that the player who did so much to revive a flagging European game in the 1980s thanks to his flamboyant style and good looks should die in a year in which the continent's leading players maintained their hold over the Americans.

By becoming the first player to officially top the money lists on both sides of the Atlantic in the same year, England's Luke Donald comfortably ended a breakthrough 2011 as the world's top-ranked player. However, it was one of Donald's Ryder Cup teammates who really arrived on the world stage.

Rory McIlroy, a mop-haired Northern Irishman, triggered frenzied talk of becoming a genuine succe-



FILE -In this Aug. 11, 2011 file photo, Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, reacts as he loses his club after hitting a tree root on the third hole during the first round of the PGA Championship golf tournament Thursday, Aug. 11, 2011, at the Atlanta Athletic Club in Johns Creek, Ga.

Associated Press.

sor to Tiger Woods by powering to an eight-shot win at the U.S. Open at Congressional. At 22, he was the second-youngest player to win a major since 1934. What made McIlroy's first Grand Slam success all the more remarkable was that it came two months after he blew a four-shot lead in the final round of the Mas-

ters, shooting a closing 80 in one of golf's more memorable meltdowns. "He's a breath of fresh air for the game," said Graeme McDowell, McIlroy's close friend who won the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach in 2010. "Perhaps we're ready for golf's next superstar and maybe Rory is it." One of the sport's clean-

est hitters, McIlroy has every shot in his bag and the clinic he produced at Congressional brought back memories of Woods' 15-shot win at Pebble Beach in 2000.

The American's haul of 14 majors — four short of Jack Nicklaus — is now in the sights of McIlroy, who finished the year as the world's

second-ranked player.

"I was trying to go out there today and emulate him in some way," McIlroy said of Woods after his final round at the U.S. Open.

So what of the former No. 1? By his very high standards, it was another year to forget.

No major wins, more injuries (leg, knee, Achilles tendon) and even a fine for spitting on the green during the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic in February, further tarnishing his name almost a year after vowing to improve his behavior following the sex scandal that ended his marriage.

What's more, he fired longtime caddie Steve Williams — much to the New Zealander's dismay — and replaced him with Joe LaCava, who used to carry the bag of Fred Couples and Dustin Johnson.

Woods did at least break a winless streak of 107 weeks by capturing the Chevron World Challenge in December, lifting him to No. 22 in the rankings and displaying some of his old magic, but there appears little chance of him dominating the game as he did for so long.

Instead, it is Donald who is leading the way. □



Los Angeles Clippers' Caron Butler, right, attempts to knock the ball away from Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant during the first half of an NBA preseason basketball game in Los Angeles on Monday, Dec. 19, 2010.

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kobe Bryant did not play in the Los Angeles Lakers' pre-season finale against the Clippers on Wednesday night because of a torn ligament in his right wrist, and his status for the season

opener on Christmas Day is up in the air. A MRI revealed the extent of the injury, which occurred early in the in the third quarter of the Lakers' 114-95 loss to the Clippers on Monday night. Bryant

Kobe Bryant day-to-day with torn wrist ligament

was examined by Dr. Steven Shin of the Kerlan-Jobe Orthopaedic Clinic. Depending on the degree of the tear, he could be sidelined as long as three to four weeks.

"He's day-to-day. As soon as I figure it out, I will let you guys know," said coach Mike Brown, who took over this season after the retirement of Phil Jackson. "The doctor has to clear him. Guys will go through the year and get hurt, obviously. Sometimes they'll get hurt and can't play, sometimes they'll get hurt and still can play. It just depends on the situation. Come Sunday, we'll see how it is. There's a chance, though, that he could play Sunday."

Bryant, who shoots right-handed, was sent crash-

ing to the floor by Clippers center DeAndre Jordan on a blocked layup and came up holding the wrist. He stayed in the game for another 3 minutes, then went to the bench for a good stretch and was allowed to return to the floor during the fourth quarter.

"I knew he landed on his wrist, but I was not aware that he was in significant pain," Brown said. "He did not tell me he was in pain, nor did our trainer (Gary Vitti) tell me he was in pain." Bryant practiced Tuesday, but did not participate in Wednesday morning's shootaround. He did not talk to the media before the game and camped out in the trainer's room.

After Monday's game, when asked about the wrist, Bryant said it wasn't a prob-

lem. Brown's understanding was that his best player did not need surgery. Last season, Bryant played in all 82 games for the fourth time in his career. And with this season reduced to 66 games because of the 149-day lockout, every game without him is a bigger deal. But the NBA's sixth all-time leading scorer continually has demonstrated his ability to play through pain at a high level.

"He came up to me in practice yesterday and said: 'My wrist is a little sore, but I'm good to go,'" Brown said.

"And when it got to competitive stuff, where it was 5-on-5, he scored runners over defenders with his left hand. So he was playing a game within himself, I guess." □

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Luongo helps Canucks beat Red Wings 4-2

VANCOUVER (AP) — Vancouver goaltender Roberto Luongo stopped 38 shots as the Canucks beat the Detroit Red Wings 4-2 on Wednesday to close within a point of the lead in the NHL's Northwest Division. Alex Burrows scored for the fourth straight game after Chris Higgins and Cody Hodgson had scored 21 seconds apart midway through the first period. Alex Edler also netted as the Canucks improved to 12-2-1 in their past 15 games. Burrows tied Daniel Sedin for the team lead with 13 goals.

Todd Bertuzzi and Drew Miller scored for the Red Wings.

***FLYERS 4, STARS 1**

In Dallas, Claude Giroux had a goal and three assists in his return from a four-game concussion absence as surging Philadelphia beat Dallas. Simmonds and Jaromir Jagr added power-play goals, and defenseman Andrej Meszaros connected at even strength for Philadelphia, which improved to 10-2-1 in their past 13 overall and 13-3-2 on the road this season. The Flyers restored their lead in the Atlantic Division to four points over the New York Rangers, who won Tuesday. Michael Ryder scored in the first minute for the

Stars, who lost the outright lead in the Pacific Division, being joined by Phoenix.

***BLACKHAWKS 5, CANADIENS 1**

In Chicago, Andrew Brunette and Patrick Sharp scored 21 seconds apart midway through the second period, setting up Chicago's win over Montreal.

Viktor Stalberg scored midway through the third period and Jonathan Toews and Bryan Bickell added late goals for NHL-leading Chicago.

Corey Crawford made 20 saves in his first start for more than two weeks for the Blackhawks, who are 8-1-1 in their past 10 games.

Andrei Kostitsyn scored a power-play goal for Montreal, which lost its fourth straight — including the past three since Randy Cunneyworth replaced Jacques Martin as coach.

***AVALANCHE 3, BLUES 2**

In Denver, Jean-Sebastien Giguere stopped 37 shots to help Colorado edge St. Louis and notch its seventh straight home win.

Jay McClement scored the tiebreaking goal late in the second period while Paul Stastny and Cody McLeod also scored for the Avalanche.

David Backes and Chris Stewart scored for the

Blues, who lost in regulation for just the second time in the past 13 games.

***SHARKS 7, LIGHTNING 2**

In San Jose, the hosts scored a team-record five goals inside the first 14:47, blowing away Tampa Bay.

Logan Couture scored twice while Benn Ferriero, Joe Pavelski, Andrew Desjardins, Brent Burns and Patrick Marleau also got goals for the Sharks, who won their third straight. Dominic Moore and Martin St. Louis scored for the Lightning.

***COYOTES 4, HURRICANES 3** In Raleigh, North Carolina, Lauri Korpikoski and Ray Whitney both had a goal and an assist to lead Phoenix past Carolina.

Korpikoski scored the game-winner at 10:48 of the third period. Cal O'Reilly and Rostislav Klesla also scored for the Coyotes, who overcame a deficit entering the third period for the first time this season, at the 13th attempt.

Tuomo Ruutu got his team-leading 11th goal for the Hurricanes, while Andreas Nodl and Jiri Tlustý also scored. In other NHL games it was Phoenix 4, Carolina 3; Chicago 5, Montreal 1; Philadelphia 4, Dallas 1; Colorado 3, St. Louis 2; Vancouver 4, Detroit 2; and San Jose 7, Tampa Bay 2. □



St. Louis Blues defenseman Barret Jackman, center, tussles with Colorado Avalanche defenseman Stefan Elliot, bottom, as a referee and Avalanche teammates Matt Duchene, left, and Gabriel Landeskog, top, try to break it up in the third period of an NHL hockey game on Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011, in Denver. The Avalanche won 3-2.

Associated Press

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It's Ween, cubed, at the Fillmore

John Wenzel

© The New York Times 2011

The joke-rock duo of Gene and Dean Ween has never been a general-audience rock act.

Outside of Colorado, any-way.

Despite the reams of press the band gets, and a brief dalliance with the mainstream after the left-field MTV hit "Push Th' Little Daisies" in 1993, the kind of love that Colorado shows Ween remains unique.

"Ween has a really, really well-distributed set of fans," said guitarist and songwriter Dean, a.k.a. 41-year-old New Jersey native Mickey Melchiondo. "But there's some places where it really has just taken on its own life, something just twice as big as everywhere else. Two of those places are obvious, and that's New York and Chicago. And then there's Denver and Boulder, which are above and beyond the norm."

"Indeed, the band best known for its crude, surreal sense of humor and genre-straddling songs attracts a particularly ardent group anytime it plays here. From headlining multiple times at Red Rocks Amphitheatre to playing three back-to-back shows at the 3,500-person capacity Fillmore Auditorium – as the band will do starting Thursday – Ween inspires a loyalty typically reserved for party-ready jam bands and globetrotting DJs. "I don't have an answer for you why that is," Melchiondo said. "Maybe some places are more music towns than others? It's become a standout place for us on Halloween and New Year's – the biggest shows of the year. We've had too many memorable shows for me to even list them. Like, landmark shows. Milestone stuff."

Colorado's well-documented love of live music may account for some of that. Ween isn't known for its Phish-style improvisation or lengthy, psych-tinged instrumental passages. But its shows are proper cultural events, spiritual cousins to



"Gene and Dean Ween" are as popular today as they were when their first album came out years ago.

the jam band scene with their own language, costumes, and, yes, copious amounts of mood-enhancing chemicals.

That puts pressure on the band to deliver unique set lists each night, since some fans will attend all three Fillmore shows.

"You probably won't hear the same songs over three nights," Melchiondo said. "I've got an aggressive goal over the next few days of figuring out a 100 songs so we can pull it off. We've done it before, but it takes time to come up with three unique set lists."

That shouldn't be a problem. The band has released nine studio albums over the past 21 years, each the result of frenzied writing sessions that produced dozens of unreleased demos and castaways.

"A lot of our fans want us to release more outtakes (like 2005's 'Shinola, Vol. 1') because we have a lot of them – way more than we have released," Melchiondo said. "But I know

from doing that record that it puts you in a really weird head space. You go back and listen to something, but it's kind of like looking through baby pictures. There's a time for nostalgia and revisiting that stuff, and I still hope to make more music, so I don't really want to do that yet."

Melchiondo estimated that he and co-founder Gene Ween, a.k.a. buddy Aaron Freeman, spend about \$400 per month renting a storage locker filled with tapes of thousands of unreleased Ween songs.

And since Ween isn't finished touring and recording, it could be another couple decades before those archives see the light of day. Longtime Ween fans know that the core of the band's longevity is the enduring musical and emotional relationship between its founders.

"He and I have had parallel life experiences for the years that counted," Melchiondo said of Freeman, also 41. □



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Monday, January 2nd, 2012 closed.



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No longer just white ear buds, headphones in vogue

MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) —

When iPods hit the scene 10 years ago, the small, white ear buds that came with the devices became the symbol for listening to music on the go. Today, that's changing.

More and more people are expressing themselves with pricey headphones, with some fashion-forward music lovers rocking updated versions of the oversized headsets popular in earlier eras. Bose has been known for its larger headphones in recent years, and now celebrities have taken note and aided in the resurgence of the ear amplifiers. In 2008, Monster launched Beats by Dre with Dr. Dre, and it is the most recognizable of celebrity-branded headphones. Monster later released headphones with Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber, Diddy, Daft Punk, Nick Cannon and LeBron James.

This year, 50 Cent, Quincy Jones and Ludacris released their own line of headphones.

Dre, the Grammy-winning rap legend who has produced hits for Eminem, 2Pac, 50 Cent and Mary J. Blige, says he is offended when he sees people using generic headphones.

"It's almost like a knife in the heart," he said while promoting the headphones last year. "We're in the studio, at least me, for years at a time trying to work on music, tweaking it, trying to get the sound right, and for people to walk around and listen to the music on those cheap white headphones is ridiculous."

But some people may have a reason for not buying Beats by Dre. The cheapest set costs \$100, and the most expensive pair is \$500.

50 Cent's Sync by 50 ranges from \$130 to \$400, and the lowest price for Soul by Ludacris is \$70; the highest is \$300. (Partial sales from 50 Cent and Cannon's headphones go to charity.)

"You go out and spend three, four hundred dollars on an iPod, and then you go put your earphones in and your iPod sounds like crap," said Jimmy Iovine, chairman of Interscope, A&M and Geffen Records and co-launcher of Beats by Dre, as he was standing with Dre. "This is about releasing the sound that's in the iPod."

Monster's CEO Noel Lee took it a step further: "Most people have never heard what their iPod sounds like." Research shows that most MP3 listeners own multiple

headphones, according to Karim Noblecilla, director of product marketing for Sony's Personal Audio Accessories division.

"That's how we're seeing the market," she said. "People have two, three, even four sets for different purposes."

Noblecilla says Sony has a range of headphones targeting specific and unique demographics, from surfers to 13-year-olds. Its newest series, the Balanced Armature, is billed as the "smallest and lightest in-ear digital noise canceling headphones in the market today." It ranges from \$80 to \$500, and Sony says that although the headphones are small in size, they can "achieve high resolution sound." □



In this Friday, Jan. 7, 2011 file photo provided by the Las Vegas News Bureau, rapper Curtis "50 Cent" arrives to debut his new Slek by 50 Cent Platinum headphones at the Las Vegas Convention Center during the International Consumer Electronics Show.

Associated Press

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Stocks close higher on better job market news



Tiler Peck, a principal dancer for the New York City Ballet, left, joins NYC Ballet's principal dancer Robert Fairchild, on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Peck and Fairchild perform in "George Balanchine's 'The Nutcracker,'" which runs through Dec. 31, 2011 at Manhattan's David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center. (AP Photo/NYSE Euronext, Valerie Caviness)

PALLAVI GOGOI
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Encouraging economic reports

pushed stocks higher Thursday. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 61 points, its third gain in a row.

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits dropped last week to the lowest level since April 2008, the latest sign that the job market is healing. It was the third week in a row that applications fell. The Conference Board also

reported that its measure of future economic activity had a big increase last month. It was the second straight gain, signaling that the U.S. economy was picking up speed and the risk of another recession was fading.

"Today, Main Street is what

matters because Main Street makes up 71 percent of the economy," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist for Prudential Securities. "You can't argue with the fact that the cost of gas has come down, which puts more money in the pockets of consumers

Claims lowest since '08 as job market improves

DANIEL WAGNER
MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the latest sign that the U.S. economy is surging at year's end, unemployment claims have dropped to the lowest level since April 2008, long before anyone realized that the nation

was in a recession.

Claims fell by 4,000 last week to 364,000, the Labor Department said Thursday. It was the third straight weekly drop. The four-week average of claims, a less volatile gauge, fell for the 11th time in 13 weeks and stands at the lowest since June 2008.

While the economy remains vulnerable to threats, particularly a recession in Europe, the steady improvement in the job market is unquestionable.

"The underlying trend is undeniably positive," said Jennifer Lee, senior economist with BMO Capital Markets. "I think everyone is starting to come around to the view that, yes, there is a recovery going on."

Unemployment claims are a sort of week-to-week EKG for the job market. Except for a spike this spring, after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan hurt U.S. manufacturing, they have fallen steadily for a year and a half. Claims peaked at 659,000 in March 2009. In the four years before the Great Recession, they mostly stayed between 300,000 and 350,000. That claims are edging closer to that range is a sign that the layoffs of the past three years have all but stopped. "We haven't yet really seen substantial numbers of new jobs, but this is definitely an encouraging sign of what lies down the road," said Sam Bullard, an economist at Wells Fargo. The steady decline may also herald a further decline in the unemployment rate, which fell in November to 8.6 percent from 9 percent the month before. □





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Why some business owners think now is the time to sell

KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS
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Looking back, Cyndi Finkle wishes she had sold her craft services company, Sunday Night Dinner, early in 2008 when the economy was booming. With a track record of 30 to 50 percent annual growth for each of the previous five years, it could have been a compelling transaction. At the time, however, she was not emotionally ready to part with a business she had started in 1997 and built into one of the largest suppliers of services to television crews and casts in Los Angeles. When her husband suggested selling, "I burst into tears and looked at him as if he were telling me to cut off my arm," Finkle said. "Then everything changed, and I realized he was right." But the recession hit, and Finkle's annual revenue dropped sharply along with declining television advertising and production budgets – making it impossible for her to sell. "I've had to work really hard the last three years to save my company and get it back, a lot of times work-



Joel Lederhause, founder of DiscountRamps.com, at the company's warehouse in West Bend, Wis. Lederhause is seeking investors for his company, which sells loading, hauling and transport equipment, and has focused on cutting costs and maximizing profitability to attract them.

(Andy Manis/The New York Times)

ing for free," she said. "It was no longer about building it, it was about keeping it going until things got better." Revenue for 2011 is finally back to 2008 levels, about \$1.2 million, and Finkle is eager to sell. For one thing, she purchased another business, an art studio aimed at children, backed in part by a loan from the Small Business Administration. Moreover, the coming expiration of the Bush tax cuts means that by the end of 2012, the long-

term capital gains tax rate will increase to 20 percent from the current 15 percent (unless Congress passes legislation extending the lower rate). Failing to sell before the end of 2012, she said, could cost her tens of thousands of dollars, "and knowing that motivates me to sell in 2012." Finkle is not the only small-business owner looking to the new year as an opportune time to sell. There is a pent-up pipeline of owners who have had to put off selling

in recent years because of the economy. And now that many of these companies have at least one year of profits on the books, they are more attractive to potential investors. "A lot of these companies are having record profits because they reduced their overhead in the downturn and now sales are coming back," said John D. Emory Jr., chief executive of Emory & Co., a Milwaukee-based investment banking

company that specializes in selling businesses with \$10 million to \$100 million in annual revenue. "A lot of owners have told me they want to start a sale process in the first half of 2012, hoping to complete the sale before the end of 2012. Many owners, especially the leading edge of the baby boomers, wanted to sell in 2008, 2009 or 2010 and would have sold in those three years had the economy stayed strong." □

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ON TWO SCREENS STARTING THURS. 22 PG

Jason Lee Justin Long

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Mon - Thurs 1:20 / 3:15 / 5:10 / 7:05 / 9:00
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Halle Berry Ashton Kutcher

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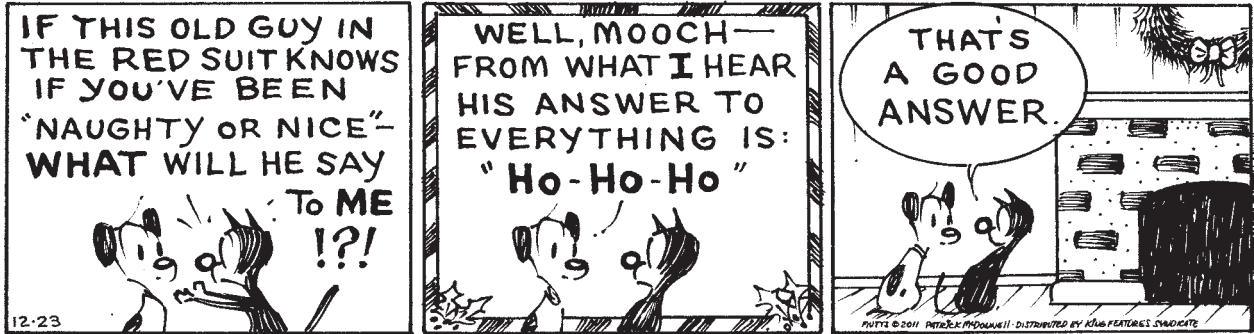
Jonah Hill Sam Rockwell

The Sitter

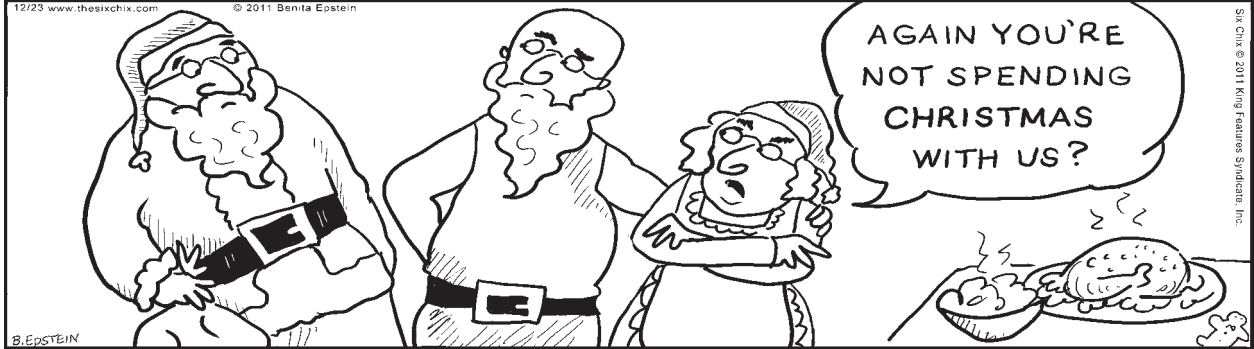
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THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

Mutts



6 Chix



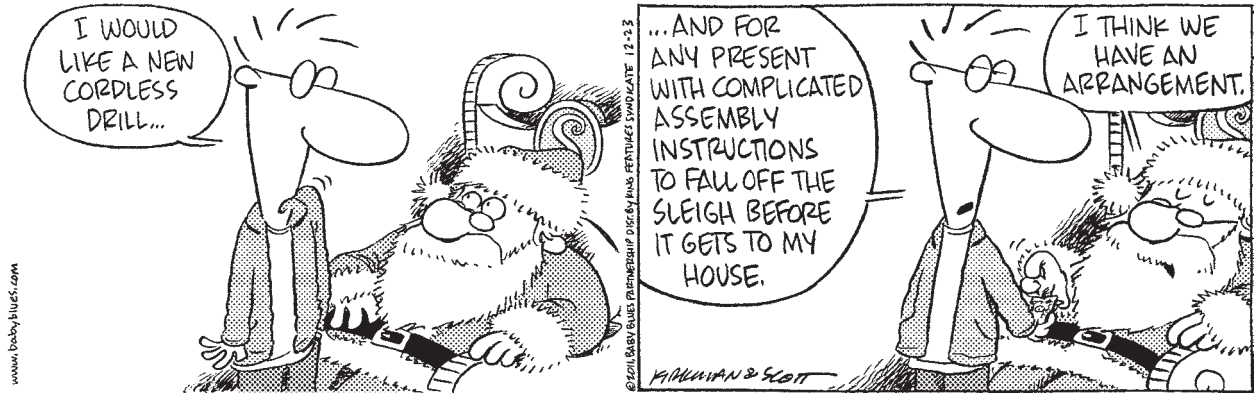
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

7	8		3		4		9	5
2			2		5			4
		4		8		3		
			2		3		1	
8								9
			7		6			
3	9		5		8		6	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

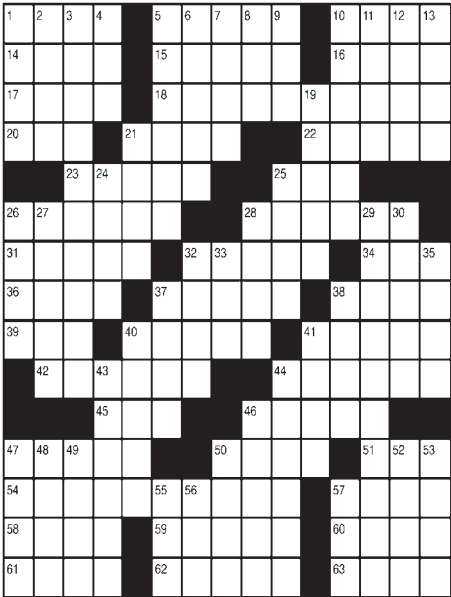
12/23

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

8	2	4	1	6	5	3	7	9
3	7	5	8	2	9	1	6	4
6	9	1	4	3	7	8	2	5
7	5	8	6	9	3	4	1	2
2	4	9	7	1	8	6	5	3
1	3	6	5	4	2	7	9	8
4	1	2	3	5	6	9	8	7
5	8	3	9	7	1	2	4	6
9	6	7	2	8	4	5	3	1

ACROSS

- Jack, once of late-night TV
- Stadium
- Poker token
- Monster
- __ bear; white arctic animal
- __ up; relax
- Poet Alfred, __ Tennyson
- School event in the fall
- Subject for Freud
- Nabors and Belushi
- Animal hides
- Tastelessly ornamented
- Half a score
- Fragments of a broken glass
- Nicaraguan guerrilla
- Bees' product
- Date trees
- Historical time
- Calgary's province: abbr.
- Musical variety show
- Flip-__; change one's mind
- Hair __; styling goop
- Ms. Zellweger
- Scoundrel
- Damascus resident
- Picante and Hollandaise
- Building wing
- Feeling of culpability
- Rub until sore
- Beach surface
- Broadcast
- Magician's phrase
- Poker bet
- Help in crime
- Wise saying
- __ tea
- Sit for an artist
- Doctrine
- Office note



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/23/11

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

J	I	G		O	W	L	E	T		M	A	I	D
A	V	E	R		R	E	E	V	E		U	N	D
B	A	N	E		G	A	V	E	L		S	E	E
		N	E	C	T	A	R	I	N	E		S	W
				L	E	N	S			C	H	E	
O	C	E	A	N	S		T	H	A	I	L	A	N
S	O	L	I	D		B	O	O	S	T		B	E
C	R	A	M		T	E	N	E	T		G	E	R
A	N	T		P	O	S	E	S		S	L	A	V
R	Y	E	G	R	A	S	S		E	L	I	T	E
				Y	O	N			A	R	I	D	
S	L	U	R		D	R	A	M	A	T	I	S	T
L	A	N	A		F	O	C	U	S		N	O	A
O	M	I	T		R	A	I	S	E		G	A	L
P	E	T	E		O	R	D	E	R		K	E	Y

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12/23/11

DOWN

- __ vaulting; Olympics sport
- Very eager
- Pompously
- Ruby or scarlet
- Plant pests
- Spacious
- Lawn trees
- Scot's denial
- St. Joan of __
- Concrete
- Ice balls
- "This __ brain surgery, you know"
- Small dowels
- Unlocks
- Liza's mom
- Zone
- Heavy book
- Popular 1970s carpet style
- Gaps
- Hint
- Unwillingness
- Came up
- Actor Sean __
- __ Maria

- Ridicules
- Genuine
- Umpire's call
- Irritates
- Deposited
- Contradict
- Dusk
- Measuring instrument
- Fellow
- Tramp
- High cards
- Read quickly
- Object
- Make over
- Mrs. Nixon
- __ to Billy Joe"
- Goal; purpose

Whey out there in cheese country

TIM DAWKINS

© 2011 Albany Times Union

ALBANY, N.Y. – Back in the 1990s there was this DuckTales cartoon where Uncle Scrooge goes swimming in his vault full of money. My childhood dream was doing the backstroke through that vault – except it was completely filled with cheese – though it probably would've been generic American.

These days my tastes are much more refined. Oh, I still would bathe myself in cheese if I could, but it would probably be aged in a cave somewhere off the coast of Spain instead of being manufactured in a plant in Boise.

This fall I found my cheesy bliss on a trip through Washington County in upstate New York.

It started when I took the Washington County Cheese Tour – an annual event put on by the Washington County Cheese Makers. Crowds from around the area came to taste locally made cheeses and other dairy products right where they're made. The animals whose milk helped to create the delectable products being sampled actually look on while you toothpick your way through lines of delicious, tangy, cheesy goodness.

Now, some may find this disconcerting, as the pressure to garner approval from onlooking goats and sheep is definitely tangible. However, I found them to be understanding and accommodating as I ranked my likes and dislikes. After all, you can't please everyone, right? What I'm saying is Washington County has some pretty laid-back livestock.

I sampled some of the best, most complex cheese I have tasted in a long time. It's amazing to me how many different flavors artisanal cheese makers can pull out of milk. The cheeses ran the gamut from hard to soft, pungent to mild, raw to pasteurized and aged to young. One thing united them: They were all delicious. And while the cheese event is only once a year, you can get the cheeses, and a cheese tour type experience, pretty much year round. But given winter weather, it would be advisable to check if the farm you plan to visit will be open.

Here's a look at some of the farms and what they offer:

SWEET SPRING FARM

Types of cheese: Anything goat

Standout cheese: I talk a good game about loving cheese, but it's time to come clean. Until I visited Sweet Spring Farm, I hated anything derived from goat's milk. Then, in the spirit of the day, I tried their garlic and herb spreadable goat cheese. It was hands down my favorite cheese of the day and I dropped \$8 on a cup of the stuff. Proof enough of its quality, no? I still can't do pure chevre, but I'll take everyone's word about how delicious it is.

Where you can buy it: The Saratoga Springs Farmers Market, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays at Division Street Elementary School, 220 Division St.

Can you visit the farm? Not unannounced, but they assured me that if you call ahead they will likely be able to set something up for you. 240 Saunders Road, Argyle, N.Y. 518-692-7445.

Other interesting items: SSF makes their own almond goat's milk soap that smells so good I almost tried to take a bite of it.

ARGYLE CHEESE FARMER

Types of cheese: Everything cow (including yogurt and gelato) Standout cheese: The star of the show: cheese curds. If you've been to Montreal you've likely indulged in poutine, that really stodgy french fry dish that involves melted cheese, gravy, and a whole lot of guilt. Argyle Cheese Farmer's cheese curds, Miss Muffet's favorite snack, come in several different flavors and make an easy snack when you're on the run. □

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Study linking virus and chronic fatigue retracted

MALCOLM RITTER

AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The journal Science is retracting a controversial 2009 report that linked chronic fatigue syndrome to a vi-

rus.

In an unusual move, Science is taking that step on its own. Normally, authors retract their own research papers when serious problems arise after

publication.

But Science has lost confidence in the report and the validity of its conclusions, editor-in-chief Bruce Alberts writes in Friday's issue.

He said most of the authors have agreed in principle to retract the paper, "but they have been unable to agree on the wording of their statement."

A retraction signed by

all the authors "is unlikely to be forthcoming," Alberts wrote.

The original paper, from scientists at the Whittemore Peterson Institute in Nevada and the National Cancer Institute, reported finding a virus called XMRV in blood cells of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome.

That raised hope that a cause of the mysterious illness had been found.

But follow-up studies by other scientists found no evidence of such a link. Last May, Science published two reports suggesting the original finding was due to lab contamination.

At the time, Alberts published a statement declaring that the validity of the study was "now seriously in question."

Then in September, the authors retracted some of the data, citing contamination.

In his statement on the full retraction, Alberts said the authors had also acknowledged omitting important information about the study's procedures in an illustration of some lab results.

Robert Silverman of the Cleveland Clinic, one of the paper's 13 authors, said in a statement Thursday that he was pleased by the full retraction.

He said he had sought one this summer after finding that blood samples were contaminated. The Whittemore Peterson Institute is preparing a statement about the retraction, a spokeswoman said Thursday. □

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Odd holiday traditions for David Letterman

By DAVID BAUDER

NEW YORK (AP) — Think holiday traditions and mistletoe, eggnog and caroling come to mind. David Letterman's Christmas includes target practice at a giant meatball, the Lone Ranger and singer Darlene Love.

Each has become part of CBS "Late Show" lore through the years, their appearances anticipated by fans like wrapped presents under a tree. The traditions return Friday.

Comic Jay Thomas will be back to try to knock a meatball off the top of a Christmas tree with a football and recount his

Lone Ranger anecdote again. Love will sing "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" as fake snow flutters to the stage.

"The best traditions are the ones you can't plan," said Rob Burnett, executive producer of "Late Show."

"These happened very organically on our show and it is very silly and very goofy. It makes sense with the sensibility of the 'Late Show' to be part of our tradition."

Letterman's on-set Christmas tree is frequently decorated with oddities, such as the meatball on top instead of a star, angel or bow.

It all started one night back in 1998 when New York Jets



In this photo released by CBS, host David Letterman, right, and comic Jay Thomas get ready to throw footballs at the Late Show Christmas tree during the annual Late Show Holiday Quarterback Challenge on the set of "Late Show with David Letterman," airing Thursday, Dec. 23, 2011 on the CBS Television Network.

Associated Press

Kid Rock, Detroit church donate gifts to needy

DETROIT (AP) — Kid Rock is teaming up with a Detroit church to give away hundreds of gift baskets and retail gift certificates to needy families in the area where he got his start and still calls home.

The musician's nonprofit organization joined Hartford Memorial Baptist Church on Wednesday to distribute 100 gift certificates for Meijer retail and grocery stores, along with more than 300 gift baskets.

Kid Rock, who was born Robert Ritchie, grew up and lives in suburban Detroit. He and the Kid Rock Foundation have been honored this year for their philanthropic contributions by Goodfellows Detroit and the NAACP's Detroit branch. Kid Rock is known for dabbling in various musical styles, from hip-hop and hard rock to country and Southern rock. □

Finnish police detain Lambert after bar brawl

HELSINKI (AP) — Finnish police say they detained Adam Lambert after he assaulted people who tried to break up a fight between the former "American Idol" star and his boyfriend in downtown Helsinki.

Detective Superintendent Petri Juvonen said the fight spread from a popular gay bar early Thursday into the street where Lambert was suspected of hitting two people who tried to break it up.

Juvonen said that Lambert's boyfriend, "Finnish Big Brother" star Sauli Koskinen, also was held for questioning. He said no weapons were used, no one was seriously hurt and



Singer Adam Lambert (L) and Sauli Koskinen arrive at the 2011 American Music Awards held at Nokia Theatre L.A. LIVE on November 20, 2011 in Los Angeles, California.

that it was not "a very serious incident." □

quarterback Vinny Testaverde was a guest. He and Letterman picked up footballs and began tossing them at the tree, aiming for the meatball. Watching their failures impatiently from the wings was Thomas, former quarterback at tiny Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, N.C. Thomas had discussed trying the target practice with Letterman before the show, but no one told that to stage manager Biff Henderson. He blocked Thomas from going out onstage.

"I fake to the right and Biff goes to catch me and I run around him like a scramble," said Thomas, who picked up a football and threw with laserlike accuracy at the meatball, accomplishing in one throw what the NFL quarterback couldn't in several.

Testaverde has been forgotten, but Thomas is invited back each year to see if he can repeat his feat.

Around the same time — Thomas isn't sure exactly when — Letterman heard about a story Thomas told of his time as a radio DJ in the South when he and a friend had to give a ride to Clayton Moore, star of television's "Lone Ranger." We won't be spoilers; Letter-

man has called it the "best story I've ever heard."

The story, too, is repeated each year. Thomas said he and Letterman have never discussed why it has become a tradition. It just has. "It is the craziest thing I have ever been a part of," he said.

Thomas practices before each appearance, taking a football into Central Park and aiming at a particular tree branch.

Two years ago Letterman knocked off the meatball with his own throw before Thomas even came out onstage, leaving the comic — whose acting career has cooled — to moan in fake distress: "This is all I have!" Last year Thomas needed a cortisone shot to make the show after he had injured his shoulder throwing a golf ball. "They're shooting me up like a racehorse to make \$760 and hit a friggin' meatball," he said.

He's heard from plenty of people who look forward to his annual appearance, including a well-known Hollywood movie director. The power player, who Thomas wouldn't name, confessed that he's bipolar and often plays a recording of the holiday show when he's glum. Thomas is glad to

cheer up the director. He'd like it even more if he could get an audition for one of the man's movies.

The Darlene Love tradition has deeper roots. Letterman bandleader Paul Shaffer learned early on when he tried to play "Monster Mash" on Halloween that his boss isn't much into holiday music. But Love's "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)," originally recorded for the landmark 1963 holiday album "A Christmas Gift for You," is "the one place where his and my holiday tastes coincide," Shaffer said. "He loves the song."

Shaffer was performing with Love in Ellie Greenwich's musical "Leader of the Pack" in winter 1984 and Letterman came to see them. Shaffer isn't sure which man had the idea of inviting her on the show — then televised on NBC — but everyone was pleased with the results.

The first time, Shaffer accompanied Love with a quartet. As the years went on musicians were added to approximate original producer Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound," and upward of 20 musicians and singers have been onstage with Love. □

'Pina': A 3-D tribute to artistic impulse

A.O. SCOTT

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One of the interesting and unexpected film stories of 2011 is about 3-D, which simultaneously lost commercial potency and gained artistic credibility. Those who dismiss the format as the industrial gimmick (and excuse for price gouging) that it frequently is may need to reconsider now that a handful of certified auteurs have given it a try. Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese, grand old men of baby-boomer-Hollywood, have made 3-D children's tales ("The Adventures of Tintin" and "Hugo"), which is certainly noteworthy. More remarkable, perhaps even astonishing, is that Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders, stalwarts and survivors of the iconoclastic New German cinema of the 1970s, have used 3-D in new documentaries.

Herzog's "Cave of Forgotten Dreams" and Wenders' "Pina" are explorations of the artistic impulse, primordial and postmodern. "Pina" is a tribute to Pina Bausch, the German dancer and choreographer who died in 2009. Her work has appeared on film before; Pedro Almodovar's "Talk to Her" uses the dance "Cafe Muller" as an emotional touchstone. That piece, an obstacle



Fabian Prioville and Azusa Seyama during a scene of the documentary film "Pina," directed by Wim Wenders, in an undated handout photo. The film, which explores the artistic impulse of 3-D, primordial and postmodern, is a tribute to Pina Bausch, the German dancer and choreographer who died in 2009.

(New York Times)

course of wooden chairs and wild emotions set to music by Henry Purcell, figures prominently in "Pina," encapsulating both Bausch's aesthetic and Wenders' desire to replicate on screen the depths and distances of the staging.

The dances in "Pina" take place on traditional stages and also on city sidewalks and tram cars (in Wuppertal, the northwestern German city where Bausch's company is based), in forests and fields and, thanks to an especially ingenious coup de cinema, in what

looks like a portable box. Alternating between highly stylized, precise gestures — of hands, fingers and faces as well as torsos and limbs — and more flowing and expressive movements, the dancers enact dramas of desire, sexual violence and the passage of time. □



In this June 6, 2011 file photo, Apple CEO Steve Jobs is shown during a keynote address to the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco.

Associated Press

Apple's late boss Steve Jobs to receive Grammy

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Apple co-founder Steve Jobs is receiving a posthumous Grammy for his technological innovations in the arts. Jobs is among a dozen people, music groups or companies receiving honorary awards Feb. 11, the day before the Grammys. He died of cancer in October.

The Grammys are honoring Jobs with one of the group's Trustees Awards, citing the late Apple boss' advancements that "transformed the way we consume music, TV, movies, and books." □



This May 26, 2010, file photo shows Bruce Beresford-Redman, the former "Survivor" producer posing for a photo at his home in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.

Associated Press

Judge upholds TV producer's extradition to Mexico

By LINDA DEUTSCH

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Los Angeles federal judge on Wednesday upheld former reality show producer Bruce Beresford-Redman's extradition to Mexico to face charges in his wife's death. U.S. District Judge Philip S. Gutierrez wrote that there are many pages of competent evidence supporting prosecution claims that the producer killed his wife during a family vacation in Mexico last year. The Emmy-nominated producer of "Survivor" has been jailed in Los Angeles since November on a fugitive warrant.

His attorneys filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus in August arguing that his detention was not supported by facts in the case. Gutierrez disagreed, saying all evidence points to a homicide committed by Beresford-Redman. He cited "pages upon pages of competent evidence demonstrating that the fugitive committed the offense for which extradition was sought, namely the aggravated homicide of the victim." Gutierrez said materials presented to him documented "the infidelity, fighting, screaming from the

hotel room, the fugitive's opportunity to dispose of the victim's body" and other evidence including scratches and abrasions found on Beresford-Redman's body and his flight to avoid arrest in Mexico. "All of this evidence points to homicide committed by the fugitive," said the judge's two-page ruling. Beresford-Redman's attorney, Richard Hirsch, said he was weighing his options in the case and would make a statement later. Hirsch could appeal the decision to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. If he

does not appeal further, U.S. Attorney's spokesman Thom Mrozek said Mexico's extradition request would be submitted to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton for final disposition. Prosecutors have presented statements from hotel guests who said they heard loud arguing and cries of distress coming from the couple's room on the night Monica Beresford-Redman went missing. Her body was found days later in a sewer cistern not far from the room the couple shared with their young children. □

Separation of Newt and state



MAUREEN DOWD

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WASHINGTON — Just when you thought Newt couldn't get any more grandiose, he leaps in to save freedom of religion in the most religiously free place on earth. On his website Tuesday, he urgently vowed to establish a White House commission "On Day One" of his presidency (heaven forefend) "to examine and document threats or impediments to religious freedom in the United States." Watching his numbers falling in Iowa, he doubled down on his unconstitutional assault on "activist judges," saying he would investigate "the extent to which courts throughout the U.S. are undermining the First Amendment and misconstruing the historical basis for religious freedom in America." His latest manifesto, which should have been addressed "Dear Iowa Fundamentalist Caucus-goers," states: "As litigants demand that courts and judges intervene to create new 'rights' out of whole cloth, such litigants and their supporters seek to limit the freedom of others to express their deeply held religious commitments to, for example, the value of every human life and to marriage as between one man and one woman."

As opposed to one man and three women? Nobody is forcing Christians to marry anyone they don't want to marry; they're preventing gays from marrying people they want to marry. Gingrich doesn't seem concerned about the religious freedom of Muslims. He compared the Muslims trying to put up a mosque near ground zero to Nazis putting up a sign next to the Holocaust Museum. President Newt just wants the right to limit other peoples' rights in the name of religion. He promised to probe any new health and human services mandate "that would require health-insurance plans to cover contraception, sterilization and drugs known to induce abortion that may violate and interfere with the religious freedom of individuals, and weakening of conscience clause protections for health care workers." And Savonarola Gingrich will swoop into schools, "from primary to university level," to see who's "forcing students to violate their conscience by forcibly imposing beliefs about sexual orientation, gender, same sex 'marriage' and abortion." In a shot across the bow to President Barack Obama, who is considering whether to bow to Catholic pressure and to grant

an exemption from covering contraception in health plans sponsored by employers who object, Gingrich said he would support "the rights of individuals, business and religious institutions that have a conscientious objection to providing or engaging in services that support values they oppose."

In an article on Saturday in The Times, Laurie Goodstein called Gingrich "a culture wars Catholic," very different from a Kennedy-era Catholic, a politician emblematic of conservative Catholics and evangelical Protestants joining forces "in what they see as a defining struggle against abortion, same-sex marriage and secularism." Gingrich was born a Lutheran, became a Southern Baptist at Emory University and converted to Catholicism in 2009. He and Calista, who is a paid singer in the Basilica choir, have made the shrine their stage, becoming stars on the Eternal Word Television Network, which films there. The Basilica Bookstore sponsored a book signing for Gingrich's 24th book, "To Save America: Stopping Obama's Secular-Socialist Machine." And the Gingriches produced a documentary last year about John Paul II, celebrating the pope who rejected attempts to liberalize the church. For anyone who grew up with relatives who could never get annulments even when their spouses abandoned them after a brief time, it was galling to see Gingrich — who divorced twice to marry younger mistresses, and who left his wives when they were sick — be celebrated at a conversion Mass by Washington's church hierarchy at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, where Robert Kennedy attended Mass daily when he served in the Senate. Monsignor Walter Rossi, the rector of the Basilica, told Goodstein that he had met weekly for seven months with Gingrich to instruct him. "We have spoken extensively about the fact that the United States and many parts of the world are becoming a secular society where any mention of God is discouraged and, in some places, even forbidden," Rossi said. Gingrich has wrapped his political redemption saga in his story of Catholic salvation. He quickly backed away from saying life begins at implantation when he attracted the ire of Roman Catholics, who believe it begins at conception. At the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in April, Gingrich said he talked to Rossi about the "government-favored pagan culture to replace Christianity" in Europe and how it's spreading here. "The American elites are guided by their desire to emulate the European elites and, as a result, anti-religious values and principles are coming to dominate the academic, news media, and judicial class in America," Gingrich said. Whatever shrine Newt goes to, he makes into a shrine to himself. □



The end, for now



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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With the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops from Iraq, we're finally going to get the answer to the core question about that country: Was Iraq the way Iraq was because Saddam was the way Saddam was, or was Saddam the way Saddam was because Iraq is the way Iraq is — a collection of sects and tribes unable to live together except under an iron fist. Now we're going to get the answer because both the internal iron fist that held Iraq together (Saddam Hussein) and the external iron fist (the U.S. armed forces) have been removed. Now we will see whether Iraqis can govern themselves in a decent manner that will enable their society to progress — or end up with a new iron fist. You have to hope for the best because so much is riding on it, but the early signs are worrying. Iraq was always a war of choice. As I never bought the argument that Saddam had nukes that had to be taken out, the decision to go to war stemmed, for me, from a different choice: Could we collaborate with the people of Iraq to change the political trajectory of this pivotal state in the heart of the Arab world and help tilt it and the region onto a democratizing track? After 9/11, the idea of helping to change the context of Arab politics and address the root causes of Arab state dysfunction and Islamist terrorism — which were identified in the 2002 Arab Human Development Report as a deficit of freedom, a deficit of knowledge

and a deficit of women's empowerment — seemed to me to be a legitimate strategic choice. But was it a wise choice?

My answer is twofold: "No" and "Maybe, sort of, we'll see."

I say "no" because whatever happens in Iraq, even if it becomes Switzerland, we overpaid for it. And, for that, I have nothing but regrets. We overpaid in lives, in the wounded, in tarnished values, in dollars and in the lost focus on America's development. Iraqis, of course, paid dearly as well.

One reason the costs were so high is because the project was so difficult. Another was the incompetence of George W. Bush's team in prosecuting the war. The other reason, though, was the nature of the enemy. Iran, the Arab dictators and most of all al-Qaida did not want a democracy in the heart of the Arab world, and they tried everything they could — in al-Qaida's case, hundreds of suicide bombers financed by Arab oil money — to sow enough fear and sectarian discord to make this democracy project fail.

So no matter the original reasons for the war, in the end, it came down to this: Were America and its Iraqi allies going to defeat al-Qaida and its allies in the heart of the Arab world or were al-Qaida and its allies going to defeat them? Thanks to the Sunni Awakening movement in Iraq, and the surge, America and its allies defeated them and laid the groundwork for the most important product of the Iraq war: the first ever voluntary social contract between Sunnis, Kurds and Shiites for how to share power and resources in an Arab country and to govern themselves in a democratic fashion. America helped to midwife that contract in Iraq, and now every other Arab democracy movement is trying to replicate it — without a U.S. midwife. You see how hard it is.

Which leads to the "maybe, sort of, we'll see." It is possible to overpay for something that is still transformational. Iraq had its strategic benefits: the removal of a

genocidal dictator; the defeat of al-Qaida there, which diminished its capacity to attack us; the intimidation of Libya, which prompted its dictator to surrender his nuclear program (and helped expose the Abdul Qadeer Khan nuclear network); the birth in Kurdistan of an island of civility and free markets and the birth in Iraq of a diverse free press. But Iraq will only be transformational if it truly becomes a model where Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, the secular and religious, Muslims and non-Muslims, can live together and share power.

As you can see in Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Bahrain, this is the issue that will determine the fate of all the Arab awakenings. Can the Arab world develop pluralistic, consensual politics, with regular rotations in power, where people can live as citizens and not feel that their tribe, sect or party has to rule or die?

This will not happen overnight in Iraq, but if it happens over time it would be transformational, because it is the necessary condition for democracy to take root in that region. Without it, the Arab world will be a dangerous boiling pot for a long, long time.

The best case scenario for Iraq is that it will be another Russia — an imperfect, corrupt, oil democracy that still holds together long enough so that the real agent of change — a new generation, which takes nine months and 21 years to develop — comes of age in a much more open, pluralistic society. The current Iraqi leaders are holdovers from the old era, just like Vladimir Putin in Russia. They will always be weighed down by the past.

But as Putin is discovering — some 21 years after Russia's democratic awakening began — that new generation thinks differently. I don't know if Iraq will make it. The odds are really long, but creating this opportunity was an important endeavor, and I have nothing but respect for the Americans, Brits and Iraqis who paid the price to make it possible. □



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